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Reasons for faith : being the
eighteenth course of lectures to men

REASONS FOR FAITH.

REASONS FOR FAITH:

BEING

*THE EIGHTEENTH COURSE OF LECTURES
TO MEN AT S. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.*

BY THE RIGHT REV.

A. F. WINNINGTON INGRAM, D.D.,
LORD BISHOP OF LONDON.

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

THESE Lectures were delivered extempore and were taken down in shorthand. They are published without any corrections, except necessary corrections in grammar or spelling, and the reader must therefore excuse many defects in style and expression.

A. F. S.

ALL SAINTS' DAY, 1899.

REASONS FOR FAITH.

I.—WHY DO I BELIEVE IN GOD?

WHEN I was asked to undertake the responsibility of speaking to you on these four evenings, I could think of nothing better than for us to consider together the ground of our common Faith; and certainly the numbers that have come to-day look as if you thought that such a consideration, even if inadequately carried out, might be of some help to you.

And the subject for this first evening is this: Why we believe in God. Or in other words—and I would draw your special attention to the precise way in which I ask the question—"Is there a Being of infinite Power, Wisdom, Righteousness, and Love?" Notice those four points, because they form, as it were, the backbone of our subject.

Those who have ever known what it is to doubt that there is, or who may have lived for a time without a belief in such a Being, will know the

awful blank which the absence of such a belief leaves. I think it is a French writer who says, "When I come across a man who has given up his belief in a God, I take off my hat to him as to one who has suffered a great loss." "The Great Companion is dead :" they are the words, I think, of Professor Clifford, and there is no more touching description of the condition of a man who has lost his belief than that.

I ask the question in that particular form, because it at once differentiates our discussion to-night from two or three other things. This question, "Is there a Being of infinite Power, Wisdom, Righteousness, and Love ?" means, Do we believe in what is called *Theism* ? And Theism is a totally different thing from a mere belief in some religious force. You will find, if you read much philosophy or modern writing, that many people admit the existence of some kind of vague religious influence, which they cannot avoid perceiving as they think out things ; but what we set ourselves to discuss to-day is something much more than that —Is there a personal God ?

So, again, our question to-night is distinct from *Pantheism*. Pantheism is that form of belief which identifies God with the world, and the world with God. I have no time to discuss that to-night. So, again—and Dr. Liddon, in this Cathedral, was never tired of pointing out this—it is distinct from

Deism. The Deist does believe in a God, but in a God who is enthroned in magnificent inactivity, somewhere far away from the world, with no effective or efficient influence upon the world at all. And therefore it is not a mere religious influence, it is not Pantheism, it is not Deism, we are discussing to-night; what we are discussing to-night is, Have we any grounds for believing in Theism?

And in discussing this there are three things we have to beware of in our attitude. First of all, we must beware of what is called *anthropomorphism*. It is as well to understand these things. I have no doubt I have a very varied audience here—some men who understand all these phrases perfectly well, and others who perhaps want to understand why they believe in a God, but to whom these long words need to be explained. You will find that time after time people warn us against anthropomorphism—that is, making out that God is exactly like man. Of course, the real truth is that as men we have to speak in terms of men; a geologist has also to do so—he has to speak of “tilted rocks,”* and so on. We can only speak in terms of a man to men; but we must beware, in speaking of God, as though He was a magnified man. Man is in the image of God, but that is a very different thing from saying

* See Curteis, “Scientific Obstacles to Christian Belief.”

that God is in the image of man. So, again, we must beware of undue dogmatism. "God is in heaven, thou art on the earth; therefore let thy words be few." In other words, anything like undue confidence, anything like speaking as if we had seen the whole thing before our eyes, is very offensive in a lecture or discussion like this. Just as a minnow in a little creek cannot possibly know all about the great ocean, so we must not speak as if we, with our finite intelligences, could grasp and comprehend the whole infinite. You will find, as we go on, that that explains many of our difficulties—so many of us refuse to admit that we cannot know everything. As a matter of fact, in one sense we are all agnostics; we all have to admit that there are great regions of truth and regions of knowledge which we can only partially comprehend. Then, thirdly, we have to beware of what I may call undue agnosticism; because we can only see part of a thing, it does not follow that we have not got a real knowledge of that part; and because we can only apprehend part of the great heavenly truths by which we are surrounded, it is false modesty to say that we cannot know what we do know. I mean this: if you have in your offices agnostic friends, and they say to you, "How is it possible to know all these things?" your answer is this: "I may not know all these things; but what I do say is, that

when certain parts of them have been revealed and told me, I can know what I am told—I can know the part which I do apprehend."

Now, with these safeguards, we will take, one by one, the various attributes of God. And first of all we will ask ourselves this: How do we know God at all? How do we know anything whatever about God? And we are answered at once by a similar question, How do we know anything about our brother man? How could I, for instance, if I lived with you for a month, know anything about you? I never could see you—you would be out of my ken, right behind anything I could see. I should judge what your character was through your manifestations. I should hear what you say, I should see what you do, I should watch your conduct, and make a kind of instantaneous inference from your manifestations as to who and what you were behind it all. When a man dies we say, "He is gone." The body is lying there, his limbs are there, every part of him that is physical is there; but we say, "He is gone," which shows that we realize that we only know him through his manifestations, and that the mere eye, the mere arm, the mere head, is not the man. So is it we learn to know God—we learn to know Him through His manifestations. And when the Indian hunter was asked about God, and said, "I see His footprints on the sand," he was giving a very true

answer ; he meant that, just as he traced some great animal in his native country by watching the tracks that he made, and gathered from them the sort of an animal it was that he was tracking, so he had to use the same method in discovering God. And, therefore, we will make up our minds that the only way to learn to know God is exactly the way we learn to know our brother man, and that is through watching His manifestations.* Let us, then, watch the manifestations of God, and see whether from them we can collect these four things of which we are in search : Is He *powerful*? Is He *wise*? Is He *righteous*? and Is He *loving*?

And first, Is He *powerful*? Every effect demands a cause, and a great effect demands a great cause. I suppose that most of us have gone out on some starry night and looked up into the heavens and reflected that those twenty million points are as a matter of fact great blazing suns, bigger than our sun ; and that the sight of these twenty million sweeping on at enormous speed, perpetually going on and on, God only knows where, through space, never in the same place again, is one of the most moving spectacles which you can possibly see. To my mind it is perfectly astounding how we, a short-lived race of men, can live on this little planet, going nineteen miles a second round one out of twenty million blazing suns, can look at it and remain so

* This argument is well drawn out in Prof. Flint's "Theism."

unmoved as we do. One would have thought that it was the greatest romance in the world to take part in such a glorious march through space. It must be want of imagination for us to take the whole thing so easily as we do—marching on, Heaven only knows where.

Well, I am leading up to the manifestation of the power of God. What power is it, we are bound to ask, that is keeping these twenty million great, tremendous bodies, at this enormous speed—and, notice, keeping them not running into one another, not colliding, but keeping them in a solemn, orderly march through the heavens? Let me speak with the utmost possible respect of all the wonderful help that science has given us. There is nothing more futile than to imagine that there is the smallest opposition between Science and Religion—it is one of the most foolish ideas. Truth is one, and always must be one, and can never contradict itself. And, therefore, wherever we can find truth, in science, history, criticism of the Bible, anywhere you like, we who put our hands into the hands of Jesus Christ are leaning upon the truth, and we welcome the truth from whatever quarter it comes. And therefore we ask our scientific friends what their explanation of all this wonderful thing is; and they tell us that as far as they can see they must reduce everything to matter and force. They look upon these blazing suns, and other forms of

motion, as a mode in which force is playing upon matter. We then ask, Where does that force come from? To this simple question any scientific man here would give the same answer—"I have not the slightest idea." That is really the answer of science. Let us push the answer a little farther back, and see if we can discover any reason for thinking that this force must come from some power outside the world working on the world. And first we notice that we are told, by a man like Sir John Herschell, that every atom has the essential nature of a manufactured article. Secondly—and we are taking these teachings straight from science—we are told that *life can only come from life*, that you cannot generate life out of dead things, and that, therefore, force comes from force. So, again, we are told that as we look into all the originating forces which originate things in the world as we know it, the chief is Will. And therefore, putting these two or three points together, we say this: That—although we could not prove this from science—on other grounds which we come to presently, we are justified in believing that we have an answer to give to the question which science cannot answer, and that just as life in the world comes from life, so this force in the world, this enormous force perpetually being occupied in working the laws of nature—for every law of nature wants a continual application

of force, just like a stone swíng round wants a continual application of force to keep it going round—that force comes from a forceful Being whom we agree to call God. There is not a single scientific discovery of any sort that contradicts such a belief. We reach then, our first point, that nature is an effect whose cause is God, and that that God must be an enormously powerful God to be able to put forth such power.

Secondly, Have we any reason for believing that this God is a wise God ? Have we any reason for supposing, as we look upon nature and upon the world, that God is infinitely wise in details as well as infinitely powerful ? Take this little earth. Why is it that, as it scuds through space, the meteors which are falling upon it perpetually as it rushes along do not stone us in the streets of London ? Seventy miles of atmosphere have been wrapped round the earth, catching the meteors and making them fall into fine dust, softening the light of the sun, giving air for our lungs to breathe, and making life possible for us. There is an instance of careful arrangement on God's part of detail round one of the smallest planets, while He is directing the twenty million blazing suns. So, again, take chemistry. How is it that, out of the rain-water as it falls, the plant is able just to suck out of that rain-water, as it soaks in, the particular thing that it wants to make it grow ? Or take, again, history.

I think history is quite as striking as anything else. Among all the changes and chances of life, with the obstinate thing that a man's will is—with all this to deal with, with this tremendous material, some one has woven out an orderly process, worked out some great purpose in history. Any one can see that history is a kind of progress, and that some one has had the wisdom, dealing with human wills, to work out an onward progress in the course of history. And all these things drive us one step further: that the powerful, awful Being Who originated this great universe, is wise and skilful in details. You may say, "Oh, but that is the old argument from design; we thought that was discarded altogether, now." Not at all. The argument from design is modified by recent discoveries, but not the least done away with. We can see more clearly now how things were done, but that does not prove they were not meant to be done; you might just as well say that an architect, who saw perfectly clearly how the house was to be built, did not mean to build it. There is no contradiction whatever in accurate knowledge of how a thing either has been done or is going to be done, and a purpose in doing it. In other words, because we know a little more now about the eye, and how carefully it has been adapted to this and to that, and how very likely it has been gradually evolved from an organ of less power up to a greater magnitude

and greater accuracy, that does not in the least disprove that that eye was meant to see with. We have not the least done away with the argument from design. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? He that made the eye, shall He not see?" We modify the statement, but we have not to put aside at all the argument from the careful adaptation of means to end.

So, again, with regard to that bogey to some people—Evolution. I have two or three things to say about Evolution. Most of you know, I suppose all know, that Evolution is the name given to a hypothesis—first put forward very tentatively by the great Darwin—that everything has been developed quite gradually from very imperfect forms of life. And you might imagine that such a hypothesis was a kind of atheistic hypothesis: that it conflicted with the old idea of God. But we must remember these points about Evolution: that even supposing it is a true theory (and remember at present it is only hypothesis—not absolutely proved), supposing it was true that God made some imperfect form of life or matter, and that gradually other things were woven out of it, it would no more say that it did not need a God at every step of the process than if the old Carpenter theory of the universe was held still. Take an illustration: If I were to make some matter which would slowly evolve itself into this complicated

thing which we call a watch, I should be a far cleverer artificer really than if I made a watch straight off; to make something which by slow evolution would gradually be evolved into a watch would be a far greater act of creative skill. And, therefore, however much we believe that the theory of evolution has hit off a great truth, it does not the least do away with the necessity for a God.

So again, with regard to Evolution, everybody knows that no one has yet bridged over the gap between death and life, between mind and matter; yet we must not lay too much stress upon that, for if you are founding your belief on gaps you are not founding it upon lasting ground. I say I do not care how quickly these gaps fill up; I do not care how soon there is some link or bridge found between dead things becoming alive, between matter becoming mind. However much that may be bridged over, I hold that the evolution in every stage of its process demands a God, as much as the Carpenter theory of the universe demanded a God. And therefore do not let any of you be made to imagine that to hold the evolution theory strongly is to be obliged to give up belief in a God.

That is enough about Evolution. Genesis, if you read it properly, is really giving you an account, a short summary, of what took place; it is not meant to be a scientific account, as the Bible is given us to teach us righteousness, not science.

Yet even Genesis represents a kind of evolution, a gradual development of the world, and therefore—I have not time to prove it in detail to-night—it cannot be pressed as teaching the Carpenter theory of the universe. Putting aside then the ideas that evolution is necessarily atheistic, and that the argument from design is out of date, I say that, looking at the world as I see it, finding means so carefully adapted to ends in the smallest detail, even the little shell upon the seashore being painted with the utmost care, I come to my second point about God, and that is that this great and tremendous Power is infinitely wise, infinitely skilful. What a beautiful mind God must have! What a wonderful mind, to think it all out—the great Artist thinking out the whole of His great scheme, perfect in the smallest detail!

Thirdly, then, have we any reason for supposing that this Power is a righteous Power? If we had to stop here, we could not worship mere power or mere cleverness; you must believe something more than this about Him if you are to love and worship any Being. Have we then any reason for supposing that this Power is righteous? And here we come to a most wonderful and marvellous thing which is found in the heart of every man, and that is a power which knows the difference between right and wrong, in exactly the same way as the eye knows the difference between black and white. I am not saying that

that power of knowing the difference between right and wrong has not to be carefully educated—it has to be. I am not saying that, like a looking-glass which is apt to get dirty and stained and almost useless, so this power may not become perverted and almost useless. But there is in every man ever born, however immature, this power of knowing the difference between right and wrong, as the eye knows the difference between black and white ; and we have learnt to call that power Conscience. Conscience is a great fact which nobody can possibly deny or argue away. What does conscience tell us with regard to the Power that made us and the world? It speaks, first of all, very strongly, as the deputy of another. I should like to recommend a book by Dr. Wace, called “Christianity and Morality;”* one chapter in it, “The Moral Creator,” is an excellent chapter in which he points out that this conscience speaks as the deputy of another : it tells of a law external to itself, which it interprets and applies, but did not create. Secondly, it tells us that it is connected with a Person. Why? Because it produces in us just those emotions which we feel in the presence of a person. It produces shame, and we feel shame only in the presence of a person. It produces peace, a sense of security. If you think it out—and I can only just allude to what you will find drawn out by Dr. Wace—not only

* Boyle Lectures, 1874-5.

does conscience speak as the deputy of another, not only does it speak of a law external to itself, but it connects, as it speaks, that law with a Person. I have often had to combat the idea that conscience is produced by a connection between the law of heredity and the law of association ; for instance, that the reason we think stealing is wrong is because a far-off ancestor stole something and was punished by his tribe, and that stealing and punishment were connected together, and so produced conscience. But as a matter of fact such an explanation is totally inadequate to explain conscience, for conscience thunders at us, and makes us do things dead in the teeth of what we want to do. What Kant calls "The Categorical Imperative"—that shouting of orders from conscience—is something that never can be explained by the laws of association or heredity. Thirdly—and this is a most remarkable thing—conscience bears witness, by being placed in the breast of every man, to the righteousness of God. How does it do so ? In this way. If you had a number of children in your house, would you put some one down in the middle of them, if you were a bad man, who was constantly telling them how bad you were ? If you were a good man, you would not mind the risk. So it is impossible to believe for a moment that this wonderful Power, this wise Power, would have planted down in the breast of every single son of

man what Dr. Chalmers calls a reclaiming witness against Himself, unless He was righteous. In other words, the existence of conscience is an irrefragable witness to the righteousness of God. "But," you say, "look at the world : how unequal the world is, how difficult it is to see that the righteousness of God is adequately carried out. Why is it that we see the righteous forsaken, and His seed begging their bread? Why are there such inequalities? The moral government of God," you say, "is not justified." But stop a moment. The moral government of God has not been seen yet completed. Even Aristotle said that if you want to see a thing in its full proportions you must give plenty of time. So is it with the moral government of God. When we see all that happens in another world—and it is our very conscience that forces us to believe in another world—we shall see that God is justified in His sayings, and clear when He is judged. The fundamental doctrine of our religion is that there is going to be a day, some time, when what now seem to be inequalities will be seen to be only portions of a grand scheme of equality, and the innocent will be rewarded and the wicked punished. But even here is it not true that virtue is its own reward? Why is it, for instance, that in spite of the inequalities of life, virtue, as a writer said, is infallibly self-rewarding, and vice is infallibly self-punishing? Not in riches, not in fame,

but in everything really worth the name, you will find that virtue is its own reward. And when you look into history you will find that the righteous nations are the ones that stand, and the vicious nations are the ones that go down. Do you remember in Keble's "Christian Year" how he pictures the empires? "One by one," he says, "they tower, and they are gone." Why do they tower, and go? Look into history, and you will find it is when they have lost the inner core of virtue, when they have given themselves over to luxury, or whatever it is that has lost them the inner sources of their virtue, these empires go down with a most awful crash. It is a thing we may well think of with our own empire. We are not favourites of God at all; we are merely a little bit of foam in the sunlight on the waves of history. This is our day: that is all. If we lose for a moment our national virtue we shall go down as all the other great empires have gone. And there is no explanation of the fact that the stable nations are the virtuous ones unless it is that the Power which controls everything is a righteous Power.

Then, again, you think of the suffering of the world as an argument against the righteousness of God. But take pain, for a minute; is pain an argument against a good God? Why, pain is a wonderful danger-signal. Have you ever thought of that? When the working-man picks up a white-hot iron,

he drops it. Why? Because of the pain; if there was no pain it would burn his hand off. When the woman feels the sharp stab of pain of congestion of the lungs, she sends for the doctor. If there were no pain she would die. You will find that, so far from pain being an argument against God, it is a grand danger-signal that God has given us. Go into a hospital, and see what pain does for souls. See, as I have seen time after time in that great London Hospital, men who would never think about God brought to their bearings by pain. Talk about death being an unkind thing! Why, death is the most merciful thing to us poor mortals. Supposing we never died; imagine the world full of people getting older and older and older—it is a most awful picture! The presence of death in our midst enables some of the most beautiful things in life to take place. The old grandfather carrying his child in his arms, kissing him, and so pleased to hold him lovingly in his arms—it is only possible in a world where death is, where gradual decay comes on, and where, by the providence of God, new lives take the places vacated by death. It is only a very short-sighted view of things that the existence of pain and suffering and death is an argument against the righteousness of God.

Lastly, then, can I believe that God is loving? Not, I admit, if I had nothing else than this. When I say loving, I mean has He the power of

self-sacrifice? When I say a loving father, I mean a father who sacrifices himself for his children; and in nature, in all we have gone through to-night, I have not got enough evidence that God can sacrifice Himself. And it is only when I look at the Cross, and believe it was the Eternal God on the Cross, that I have evidence enough that God has the love of self-sacrifice.

"The very God! Think, Abib; dost thou think?
So, the All-Great were the All-Loving, too;
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, 'O heart I made, a heart beats here!
Face My hands fashioned, see it in Myself!
Thou hast no power, nor may'st conceive of Mine,
But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
And thou must love Me Who have died for thee!'"

II.—WHY DO I BELIEVE IN CHRIST?

YOU will remember that last time we discussed the question, Why do we believe in God? and I went point by point through it: first of all, why we believe in the existence of a Being of infinite power, chiefly from the power seen in Nature; then we saw our reasons for believing that such a Power was also wise; then we saw why such a Power, as well as wise, was also righteous—the evidence from conscience, you remember, came in there as the main point; and when, in conclusion, we asked of this powerful, wise, and righteous Being, Is He loving? we were driven to Christianity for the answer, and saw that though when we take Nature by itself, Nature seems to speak in two voices, yet that when we came to the full belief of Christendom in Jesus Christ, the answer is that God is loving because He is self-sacrificing.

And now we come quite naturally to our second question: Why do we believe in Jesus Christ at all? In asking the question why we believe in

Christ, what I mean is this: Why do we believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God as well as the Son of Man? And the first point that I want to put before you is: That the belief which we hold in Jesus Christ to-day is identical with the belief which the early Christians held. I draw attention to that point first, because in my debating days in East London I had one of the easiest debates that I ever had, with an Unitarian. He was a very nice man, and very courteous, but he challenged me one Sunday, before a great number, that he would prove on the following Sunday that his belief about Christ, and not mine, was the belief of S. Paul; the question was narrowed down to this—Did S. Paul believe Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, or did he not? I confined myself to four passages, which, to the working men who were, as it were, the jury who heard the arguments, satisfactorily proved that rightly or wrongly our belief was the belief of S. Paul. There are four epistles which have been undisputed as being the epistles of S. Paul; we believe that all those that are ascribed to him are his, but four of them have never been disputed, and they are the two Epistles to the Corinthians, the Epistle to the Romans, and the Epistle to the Galatians. And therefore, in arguing this question I naturally took the four epistles which are undisputed, in order to prove, if possible, the point

from them; and you find in those four epistles these four statements, one from each—

(1) Gal. iv. 4.—“God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law.” The Greek is very forcible—“out from Himself.” It is impossible to reconcile that passage with any Unitarian view of Christ’s nature.

(2) 1 Cor. viii. 6.—“One Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things.” Imagine for a moment a man, however good, having that said of him—“by whom are all things.”

(3) 2 Cor. viii. 9.—Perhaps the most touching of all the passages, because the most indirect: “Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor.” When was Jesus Christ rich, as man? Never. The man who wrote, “Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor,” must have been speaking of a richness antecedent to the days when He was a working-man in Nazareth.

(4) Rom. i. 4.—“Declared to be the Son of God with power.” A direct assertion of His Godhead.

Now, those four passages—and they might be multiplied to any extent—must convince any unprejudiced mind (and they certainly convinced all the working-men who heard the arguments on both sides) that, whether rightly or wrongly, the early Christians—the Christians of the date of S. Paul, in particular—held precisely the same doctrine of

the Godhead of Jesus Christ as we do to-day. And we may add the additional points that all this was twenty-five years after His death, and that it was held by one of the ablest men of the day, with every facility for verifying facts, and who had everything to lose by his belief. To hear some people talk, you would imagine S. Paul by becoming a Christian got into a most splendid worldly position. In a book entitled "In Relief of Doubt,"* which any of you would do well to read, there is a passage—sarcastic, but very true—as to what S. Paul did get by his belief: shipwrecks and scourging and persecution, and the loss of his brilliant prospects as a young Pharisee, in order to become the outcast of the earth.

And then, remember that there was never any difference about this in the early Church. They differed about circumcision, and about the day on which to keep Easter, but there was never the slightest difference about this point. These epistles were evidently written to churches who held precisely the same belief as the writer, because he does not teach them these things—he assumes that they hold the same belief. It seems then quite clear from these considerations that, reasonably or unreasonably, we hold to-day precisely the view of the early Christians.

(2) That brings us to the second question: Is

* R. E. Welsh. Published by Clarke and Co.

this belief a reasonable one? Is it a reasonable thing to believe that the Son of God came from heaven to earth and manifested Himself in human flesh?

I am going to give you one or two of what may be called *a priori* proofs. And, first of all, I contend that on all the reasoning we went through last time—and all the more if Evolution is true, not the less—it was likely that some sort of manifestation of God should take place. If God had taken all this trouble with the world, and brought it to this point of perfection, and then placed reasonable, sentient beings upon it, it is reasonable to believe that if He could He would teach them how to live; and teach them, too, in the best way—by example rather than by precept. Then, secondly, that when, as it is revealed to us, man in some mysterious way fell, or misused the free-will with which he was endowed, it became necessary that God should take some action on His part to win man back.

I do not know whether any of you have read Dr. Westcott's famous essay, "The Gospel of the Creation," which is at the end of his "Epistles of S. John." He holds the view very strongly that it was always in the intention of God that the Son of God should become Incarnate, and that the only difference that man's sin made was, that instead of coming and living among loving and adoring beings, and being greeted with love and

enthusiasm, and being sent back to heaven with praise and worship,—that He pushed on with what was always the original intention, in spite of its meaning death and agony and shame. Otherwise, if you think out the matter, you will find that if you take the view that the Son only came to earth because man had sinned, we owe our greatest blessing—the Incarnation—to our sin. You will find, I think—but I do not press this point—that Dr. Westcott's view is one that commends itself to one's conscience and reason; that it was always the design of God to become Incarnate; and that the chief glory of the pain and suffering was this, that when it meant pain and suffering to carry out His work, He went right on to the death in spite of it.

Then, thirdly, we have to look at prophecy. Do not imagine for a moment that modern criticism has done away with the argument from prophecy; it has certainly modified it, but it has not done away with it. Let us see how it modifies it. If the second half of Isaiah, as was probably the case, was written about one hundred years after the first half, then the allusions to Cyrus in that part are not prophecies of what is coming, but accounts of what has happened. You need not be the least afraid of modern criticism; truth cannot contradict itself. All we want to know is what the dates of the books are, and then we can adapt our theories

to them. If you imagine that modern criticism, by shifting the dates of books, has done away with the argument from prophecy, of course you make the greatest possible mistake. The great prophecy is the sight of a waiting nation looking forward through all its history to a coming Event ; and the mere date of this book or prophecy, or that book or prophecy, is nothing compared to the historical fact of the waiting expectation of every prophet and the whole Jewish nation for a great Event that was to happen. When a chaplain was asked by an impatient monarch, " Now, I have only a few minutes ; give me some strong evidence of Christianity, which will not take more than a few minutes to state," the chaplain is said to have given the answer, " The Jews, your majesty." He meant that here was a living, peaceful nation, still existing on earth which had, as a matter of historical fact, looked forward through all those years, and was looking pathetically still, for a great Saviour who was to come.

And then, when we turn from the Jews to the Gentiles, side by side with this line of prophecy among the Jews we see a line of prophecy among the Gentiles. Any of you who have had to read the early philosophers—Plato or Socrates, or any of the even earlier philosophers—will know what a search for truth was going on among them. Just as the Jews were looking for the " Root and

and Offspring of David," the Gentiles were looking for the "Morning Star." They were looking for the Truth. Some of Plato's prophecies are the most touching things in the world. For instance, after painting a picture of the ideal man, he ends up ("Republic," ii. 361)—"They will tell you that," in the case described, "the just man will be scourged, racked, bound; will have his eyes torn out; at last, after suffering every kind of evil, he will be impaled." It is a wonderful prophecy of what happened. Or, again, he says ("Phædo," 85) what we are to do when we are in doubt or difficulty: "He should persevere until he has attained one of two things; either he should discover or learn the truth about them, or, if this is impossible, I would have him take the safest and most irrefragable of human notions and let this be the raft upon which he sails through life, not without risk, as I admit, if he cannot find some word of God which will more surely and safely carry him." That was thus but a prophecy of some coming revelation. Then after his day there still continued a longing and looking for the light; those "wise men" were only typical of the great longing of the Gentile world for the Light to come. And therefore when in the book of Revelation it is put into the mouth of the glorified Christ, "I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the Bright and Morning Star," it means, "I am the Root and the Offspring

of David, whom the Jews are looking for ; and the Bright and Morning Star, whom the Gentiles have been longing for ;" in other words, " He fulfils both lines of prophecy."

Thus far I have tried to show that man was preparing for the true religion in the heathen world, while in Judaism the true religion was prepared for man. But further, it is a remarkable thing how the world was being prepared for a great central revelation. Not until this particular time in the world's history, when the Gospel had to be preached, was there an universal language spoken, such as at this time Greek was, so that the disciples could go from place to place and find a language to use which all could understand ; not until that particular time were there the Roman roads penetrating the whole Roman Empire, and the messengers could therefore find safe roads along which to carry the Gospel to every part. Not until at that particular point were the Jews dispersed in every corner of the world, so that as the early messengers went on their way they always found a nucleus, a central core, to which they could first address themselves—a little body which believed in one God. And therefore those three points —the language, the preparation of the roads, the dispersion of the Jews in all directions as a kind of preliminary pioneer of what was to come—all were leading up to the great revelation ; and this is one

of the points which prove that when Christ came at last, He came in what is called in the Bible "the fulness of time."

(3) Thirdly, then, we arrive at the time when the great revelation of God was to take place, and Jesus Christ actually came. How do we know He came at all? How do we know that Jesus Christ lived? Those who are in much doubt about the historical fact of the life of Jesus Christ should note this: Tacitus, who was consul in 97 A.D., in his account of the Neronian persecution, says that these people who were persecuted were commonly called "Christians," and that the Founder of their Faith, Christus, had been put to death by the procurator of Judæa, Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius, but that "the deadly superstition, though crushed for a time, burst forth again, not only throughout Judæa, in which it sprung up, but even in Rome, the common reservoir for all the streams of wickedness and infamy" ("Annals," xv. 44). Those who, sometimes, when strange clouds of doubt come over the mind, want some plank or raft, as Plato would say, to cling to, may remember that here, on the authority of the great historian of the Roman Empire, there is an account of the death of Jesus Christ under Pontius Pilate—"the founder of that name, Christus, had been put to death by the procurator of Judæa, Pontius Pilate, in the reign of Tiberius." Then, besides that, in

Suetonius* ("Life of Claudius," xxv. 12) we have this very interesting passage: "The Jews, who had been constantly causing tumults, stirred up by one Christus, were expelled from Rome." Now, why do I say that is an interesting passage? Because here is a Roman historian, Suetonius—and the incident shows the sort of estimate in which Christianity was held in the Roman Empire at the time—sees a great multitude of tumults going on, and heard the name Christus bandied about, and as he listens he assumes that a man named Christus is stirring them up, whereas what he really heard was the Jews and the Christians disputing with one another over Christus. Then, again, besides that, we have an early secularist, Celsus, in the middle of the second century; and Celsus says this—and, of course, the admission of a secularist is interesting to us—"We have it all," he says, "from your books; we need no other testimony." He refers to the Gospels of S. Matthew, S. Luke, and S. John, and he has eighty allusions to, or quotations from, the Gospels. That will suffice to show that the evidence for the life and death of Jesus Christ does not rest merely upon the Gospels, for it is a fact of Roman history.

What, then, is the *Character* of this Being Who comes before us on the page of history? If you

* See also "Life of Nero," xvi. 3. "Afflicti suppliciis Christiani."

turn to Lecky, who may be taken as an example of the perfectly impartial historian, you will find in "European Morals" (ii. 8) a wonderful testimonial to the influence of Jesus Christ. He says something like this: "The history of three short years has done more to regenerate mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the plans of statesmen." Well, from a great historian that is a tremendous testimonial. Then take John Stuart Mill; although he was not what we call a believer, in the strict sense, he says: "We cannot take a better rule for our life than this—live so that Jesus Christ would approve of your life." And then there is the book which, written, as it was supposed to be, from the humanitarian side of Christ, has probably convinced more people of the Divinity of Christ than any other book—"Ecce Homo;" you will see there a wonderful sketch of the character of Jesus Christ as portrayed by a real historian on the page of history. Therefore, we need go no further—we need not go to our own estimation, in the Christian Church, of the character of Jesus Christ; we take such testimony, and it convinces us of this, that the true miracle of history is, that One Who was born a Jew, among a narrow-minded set of people, in a small town, humanly speaking, with a stain on His birth, should to-day be the leading influence in Europe, with an influence ten thousand times greater than

any statesman or king or emperor. That is the true miracle of history to-day.

Therefore, if this is true, if Jesus Christ's character is justly described in such terms as I have quoted to you, we may at least select two points out of a perfect character as being certainly His ; and these two points are—as Dr. Liddon draws out so well in his "Bampton Lectures"—Humility and Sincerity. Jesus Christ, if He is all this, must, at any rate, be humble and sincere. We turn, then, to see what this humble and sincere Man says about Himself ; and we find that in His language about Himself He uses the language of uncompromising self-assertion. He says—and I should like you to think of some mere man, some good man whom you happen to know, saying this, and then think what you would think of him if he did—"Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" "I am the Light of the world ;" "I am the Bread of Life ;" "I am the Resurrection and the Life ;" "Before Abraham was, *I am* ;" "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father ;" "I and My Father are *One thing*." But some one might say, "Most of these passages occur in S. John ; have you any evidence from the other three Gospels ? Do they record anything like the same claims on behalf of Jesus Christ ?" We turn to them, and what do we find ? "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which

is in Heaven ;" "Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest ;" "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father," "All authority is given unto Me in heaven and in earth ;" "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world ;" "I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."* So much for the humility of our Lord, if He was not stating a truth. Now take the sincerity. On two occasions there were those listening to what He said, who understood Him to make His assertions in a certain sense. One was when He was speaking to Peter, when He had taken the disciples away "into a desert place," and was teaching them time after time the real truth ; and at last He says, "Whom say ye that I am ?" and Peter says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." Now we look to see what our Lord said. Did He say, as the apostle said in the Acts of the Apostles, "Ah, you must not say that: we are only men of like passion with you ; do not worship us—worship God"—horrified at the idea of any one saying such a thing to them, or paying them worship ? What did our Lord say ? He said, with an expression of joy—and expressions of joy are rare with Him—"Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but My

* Matt. x. 32; xi. 27; xxviii. 28; Luke xxi. 15.

Father which is in heaven." Then, again, on another occasion, when He said, "Before Abraham was, I am," the Jews—who were very sensitive about anything which seemed to them to be blasphemy—took up stones to cast at Him. They perfectly well understood what He meant; there was not the slightest misapprehension in their minds about what He was claiming to be, and they took up stones to cast at Him. Did Jesus Christ say, when He saw them do that, "Oh, my friends, you misunderstand me; I am not claiming to be One with the most High—it is a horrible thought to Me to utter such a blasphemy," as any humble or sincere man would have done? Not the least. He did not alter their impression for a moment; He left them with the impression, and He passed from their midst leaving them under the impression that He desired to make that claim. So what it really comes to, from the point of view of the character of our Lord, is that He comes before us and asks us this question: "What think ye of Christ? Whose Son is He?" He puts to us this dilemma: "I was not humble, and I was insincere; or, I am God." And we answer, do we not, with the answer which has been repeated for hundreds of years in the Catholic Church, the Universal Church of Christ: "Thou art the King of Glory, O Christ; Thou art the everlasting Son of the Father."

(4) Then, fourthly, if this is true, if this gigantic claim is true, we look to see two things: (1) Had He any more power over the world, if He was this, than you and I have? and (2) What effect did His coming have upon the world as it is to-day? These are the two questions we are almost bound to ask. We are led up point by point; we have seen the preliminary preparation, we have seen the antecedent probability, we have seen the preparation of the world, prophecy pointing towards it, we have seen the character come on the stage of history, we have seen the universal opinion about His character as given by outsiders, we have seen what that character claims for Itself, we see how impossible it is to reconcile such claims with such a character unless they are true; and now we come to our last question, which is, Could He do more than you and I could do? Has He left any impression upon the world? And have we witness in ourselves to these claims? One by one take these points.

First, the deeds or miracles of Christ are facts of history. I am going to give you a lecture next time on Miracles, and therefore I leave all details about miracles, and the possibility and probability of miracles till next time; but I want to mention one or two points with regard to the miracles which I will draw out in detail another time. This is where miracles come in—I want you to

particularly notice this ; they do not come in as they used to in the old Christian evidence, as the main plank on which you are going to prove Christ's Divinity—they will not stand that. You approach the miracles first through the character of Christ ; they come in now after the argument has really been brought to a head, as a necessary consequence. If Jesus Christ was, on these other grounds, what we believe Him to be, then it would be a miracle if He had not done miracles. And, with regard to miracles, note that they were undisputed by early opponents. Celsus and Julian ascribed them to magic, but did not dispute that they had happened. Secondly, they cannot be disentangled from the narrative. Thirdly, they have a moral purpose. Fourthly, they were worked in the face of opposition. Fifthly, they stand, like the Resurrection, on irresistible evidence. Sixthly, in some ways they are easier to believe now than ever they were, in consequence of the teachings of science ; so far from science having made it more difficult to believe them, it has made it easier.

Then take the second point—the effect which Christ has had on history. I should like to recommend to you a cheap and readable book, “*Gesta Christi* ;” * I do not say I endorse every word of it, but I think you will find it a very

* By Loring Bruce.

clear summary of the influence of Christ upon history. Take one thing for instance ; Christianity, or Christ—for Christ is Christianity—was the first power in the history of the world capable of rolling back the dark tide of human passion. It is almost pitiable to see the weakness of pagan philosophy in dealing with human passion. Plato, in dealing with what we look on as such an awful moral sin that we do not even mention it, discusses with himself whether it was possible to do away with it, and he decides that it was impossible to do away with this universal moral sin which we hardly mention at all ourselves ; and he says again, "except it be by the love of a divine person." What a wonderful prophecy that is ! Why, it is love of a Divine Person that has done it ; as a matter of fact, the worship and the love of Jesus Christ has stemmed moral corruption ; and although there is much vice to-day still, it at any rate hides its head. We only claim that Christianity changes the soul where it is individually accepted. It is no argument against Christianity to say that England has still some terrible blots, for England is still largely pagan ; all we have to prove, and all we want to prove—and we can prove it—is that where Christ is individually accepted by the soul, and taken as the governing principle of life, there moral evil is checked and rolled back ; and one of the *Gesta Christi* is that

Christianity has been found the only force able to roll back the tide of passion.

So again, as I used often to show the working-men in lecturing to them, they owe to-day three or four of their best possessions to Christ. They owe Him the purity of their homes. Woman to-day is in a position totally different to the position women had nineteen centuries ago ; and we shall never do a more deadly thing for the men and women of the world than if we go back from that position, or if we tamper with our marriage laws. Then, again, the working-man owes his week's wages to Christ ; all labour was slave-labour ; and you find out how, bit by bit, Christianity modified slavery, how masters and slaves going side by side to Holy Communion was the first thing that brought them together ; and how it was the power of Christ that gradually broke down slavery, and produced the brotherhood of man, and introduced the labour of paid men, instead of slavery, into the world. All this is in "Gesta Christi." So again, Christ revolutionized the education of the world ; to show this would necessitate a lecture to itself. Schools were introduced by Christianity. People say the Church has been opposed to the education of the people, but council after council of the Church said, "Let schools be established here"—not only Christian schools, but educational establishments. And we of the Church of England can afford to

smile when these things are said, for during the last eighty years the Church of England has spent in the education of the poor £10,000 a week.

Well, I come to my last point, and that is, the personal witness ; and, in some sense, this is the most important of all. Here I have a body of men who call themselves Christians to-day ; have they got any evidence, in themselves, to show for the Divinity of Jesus Christ ? What does S. John say ? "We have the witness in ourselves, we know that our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." We cannot leave out that there are men in this very cathedral to-day who have prayed to and spoken to Jesus Christ, and tried to love Him and follow Him and draw near Him humbly in His Holy Communion, and they know that they have touched Him ; they know that, acting on all this evidence, and acting in faith in it, they know they have been in touch with a real Person, that they have, as it were, touched the hem of His garment. They do not want for themselves all these arguments about Christ ; they have the witness in themselves ; they know that their "fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

And that leads me, as my last word, to say this : Do let us remember, my dear brothers, that the best Christian evidence is a Christian life. I believe you might present all these arguments,

which I have put before you as fairly as I can, and yet not convince people who did not believe ; whereas, if by your own life you are proving that you who profess to be a Christian are really different to other people, by being so unselfish, so kind-hearted, so generous, so pure, so self-controlled—you would convince ten people by your life for every one you would convince by your arguments. And therefore let us go away and resolve, not only to come and listen to the arguments, but also to live such a Christian life that “they may take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus.”

III.—WHY DO I BELIEVE IN MIRACLES?

I THINK you will agree that I sum up the objections to miracles pretty thoroughly when I sum them up under five heads: (1) that they are impossible ; (2) that they are improbable ; (3) that they are unnecessary ; (4) that they are childish ; and (5) that they did not happen.

i. That they are impossible. Why do so many think that they are impossible ? If you talk with them you will find that they have a vague idea that they are contrary to the laws of nature. What, then, are the laws of nature ? To hear some people talk, you would imagine that the laws of nature were arbitrary laws which, so to speak, made themselves. The laws of nature are nothing but this—the observed uniformities in nature ; the way in which nature, as we observe it, usually works. And therefore, if you are really scientific, you modify your theory by your facts, and do not cut down your facts to suit your theory ; the unscientific man starts with a theory, and then he

will not accept a fact which does not square with his theory. The really scientific man carefully collects his facts, and suits his theory to square with them. Take the historical Indian prince for a moment—there is a great deal in the story after all. A famous Indian prince, who had lived in a hot climate all his life, stated that ice was perfectly impossible ; he said, “ It is quite impossible to walk upon the hard water ; water is never hard enough to walk upon.” Up to a point he was right ; he had examined all the water that he knew about in his own country, and taken the testimony of all the people he was acquainted with, and not one had ever seen water hard enough to walk upon ; therefore, up to a point he was perfectly right in saying, “ Ice is impossible.” But we know, of course, that all the mistake he made was that he had not extended his purview far enough, and that if he had taken a tour over here in winter he would very likely have found the ice strong enough to bear him. Then if he had been a scientific man he would have modified his theory by his facts ; he would have said, “ I made a foolish remark in my country ; I was right in what I saw, but I did not understand the extent to which force can act on matter ; I see now that after cooling below a certain point water expands and takes the form of ice.” That story is a parable. We ought not to say, “ We have got a theory that nature can only

work in a certain way, force can only act on matter in a certain way ;" what we have got to do, if we are scientific, is to test very carefully whether there is any ascertained evidence of force acting on matter in a different way to that. Test the fact ; bring everything you can to bear upon the evidence of the fact ; but if the fact is solid you must extend the theory to take in the fact.

And that is all the stronger when you look and see these two added points. Every law of nature, to be carried on at all, needs the continual application of force ; in other words, the idea that this earth, for instance, is swinging round the sun of itself is one of the greatest mistakes in the world. Just as Herschell said that every atom of the universe had the essential character of a manufactured article, so every law of nature needs a continual application of force to keep it going. The amount of force necessary to carry us through one day is perfectly stupendous ; and when our Lord says, " My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," one of the works He is perpetually carrying out is supplying the force by which the universe is sustained. Therefore, if you once remember that force is continually being exerted upon matter it becomes more credible that the Power which is keeping it going every day may vary the way in which He uses force on matter for His own purposes. Secondly, this becomes all the more

probable when we see that poor, puny man can himself modify the laws of nature, without breaking them, by the power of his will. I can modify, without breaking, the law of gravitation. And it therefore becomes all the more unlikely that the God Who gave me, as a viceroy, this power, would not keep in His own hands the same power to modify without breaking His own laws.

Again, we all believe in the one of the most astounding miracles that ever took place. When people say, "We cannot believe in any break in the uniformity of nature," they forget that they all believe in the greatest break that ever happened in the uniformity of nature. There was a time in this universe when one moment there was no life, and the next moment there was life ; there was a moment when there was a dead universe, and then there was a moment when—however small the protoplasm—there was life. That was the moment when the greatest miracle happened ; to restore life to a dead man is nothing to it ; the appearance of life for the first time was the greatest miracle that ever happened or could happen. And therefore those who feel the difficulty about miracles interfering with the uniformity of nature, believe in the greatest break of uniformity that ever happened, and they are in their own persons the evidence of it.

Further, this idea that miracles are impossible

has been given up already by men like John Stuart Mill and Professor Huxley. Mill said, with his usual frankness, "If there is a God at all, of course it is absurd to say that miracles are impossible." And Professor Huxley, in a letter which he allowed Canon Gore to quote in his "Bampton Lectures," says, "The miracles of the Church are child's-play to the miracles I see in nature ; let no one think that we do not believe in Christianity because of the miracles. Resuscitation from apparent death, and virgin procreation, are ordinary phenomena to the naturalist." And Professor Huxley goes on to say that it is on grounds of evidence that he does not believe ; but on questions of evidence he is merely an ordinary well-read man, and is no more an authority than Mr. Gladstone or Lord Salisbury. On the point where he is a great authority—biology—he disclaims that biology has anything whatever to say against miracles. From the scientific point of view, he says he sees so many miracles in science that the miracles of the Church become child's-play to them.

2. *Are they probable?* That entirely depends upon what your view is as to the object of life. People say, "What is the object of all this ? Why should we all be alive here, at all ? Whither is the great universe going ? What are the use of these twenty million blazing suns ?" Supposing you imagine that the object is merely to have a sort

of carefully arranged panorama—to have uniformity and nothing else—orderly regiments marching through the sky—then you would say miracles are not very probable. But if, as we believe, there is a great end towards which all this is tending, and that that great end is a moral end; that the object of it all is to educate character; that the whole world is only of use so long as it turns out characters after the likeness of God, and that God has formed it in order to produce people who shall some day share Heaven with Him; that out of pure love, to spread His own happiness, He said, “Let there be light, let there be life,” that He created children to share the happiness of His home with Him; if that is the object, then miracles become probable, because if it was any use to modify the physical laws, or to mould nature in His material universe for a moral purpose, He would not let any material or physical difficulties stand in the way of working out the moral purpose on which He set His heart. And therefore, when we ask the question, Are they probable? I should say, first, not probable to happen often. Supposing, for instance, we were told that some harvest in America had grown without any seed having been sown, what effect would it have on the market of London, or upon the steadiness of man’s industry? Half the world would go off looking about for harvests that grew without any sowing, instead of going on with their own

work. What science calls the uniformity of nature, faith calls the fidelity of God.

So, again, you notice, in all God's working, "the parsimony of the miraculous." Apparently, God is very sparing in His use of anything like the miraculous; because it is quite clear that if the miraculous were to happen constantly, all our calculations would be upset, and it would be bad for our education. Therefore we should only expect that these striking things should occur at special periods, when attention had to be drawn to some special revelation. I am only dealing to-day with New Testament miracles; and surely we must admit that if the Christian theory is true as to what happened in the Incarnation, it was a time—and a very probable time—when miracles would happen if miracles were to happen at all. "The most mighty God hath spoken," as the Psalmist said. Well, if God wished to call attention to the words of His Incarnate Son, it was probable that miracles would happen if they were of use for that purpose.

3. *Are they necessary?* Well, after all said and done, it is God's business to judge that. We cannot judge whether things are necessary or not in the great plans of God; but we can see this much. First of all, that with this little slender Church left to itself, a little tiny Church in an upper room, it was very essential for it to have some strength at that early time which it might not want

afterwards. When you put a little sapling in the ground, you put a sort of guard round it for a time, to keep off the cattle, but when it becomes a big tree the guard is no longer wanted, and you take it away. So the assistance of miracles was necessary for the early Church at the start; but when the Church became stronger in its growth miracles were unnecessary. Then the early disciples wanted something to cheer them on and to encourage their faith.

And when we come to ourselves, if you ask yourselves quite frankly why we have any reason to believe in another life, you would do well to read, if you want a good book, Dr. Welldon's little book on "The Hope of Immortality." You will see there, in his very careful analysis, that while Plato and Aristotle and others have guesses about immortality, yet if you were talking to a dying man you would have nothing to say with certainty as to whether there is another world or not, unless Christ died and rose again. There is nothing that I have ever read in an ordinary philosopher which would seem worth quoting in a dying man's ears. Therefore miracles are necessary for us, for without the Resurrection we have no sure and certain hope of rising again.

Then again, from the point of view of necessity, if Jesus Christ was what we believe Him to be, it has been very well said it would have been a

miracle if He had not been able to work miracles. Therefore from the point of view of necessity, there was a kind of moral necessity in Christ's miracles, when we take into consideration what He was.

4. *Are they childish?* And let us say frankly, that the apocryphal miracles about our Lord making mud into birds and making the birds fly—the apocryphal miracles related about His childhood—are instances of childish miracles invented from pure love of the marvellous. It is a most remarkable thing that the early opponents of Christianity never say that the New Testament miracles did not happen. Julian the Apostate never says so; Celsus, the early secularist, never says so; they only explain them by magic—no one in the early days asserted that they did not happen at all. But you notice this about our New Testament miracles; they have a moral purpose. Take, for instance, the healing of the paralytic. Does our Lord heal him at once? No—"Thy sins be forgiven thee . . . But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins . . . Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house." There was a moral purpose in the miracle: it was a symbol of a great truth. And so with the other miracles. There are certainly one or two, the reasons for which it is difficult to see, because we have imperfect information—I think the stater in the fish's mouth is an instance; but still the great

majority of them have a moral teaching, and are therefore not at all mere senseless marvels.

5. Now we come to the main point: *Did they happen?* Every early account of Jesus Christ asserted that He was a miracle-worker. If you take the miracles out of their context you will find that many of the best discourses are hinged on to the miracles. Take, for instance, the teaching about the Sabbath Day: it is founded upon two miracles worked on the Sabbath. Or take the beautiful teaching about the Bread of Life: "I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst;"—it is founded upon the miracle of the five thousand. I could show you, right through, that if you are going to try and get the teaching without the miracles, you cannot do it; it is like tearing the jewels out of a jewelled robe—it breaks the whole thing, and the story becomes a mere mass of unintelligible fragments.

Or again, miracles are taken for granted in the most marvellous way in S. Paul's undisputed epistles. Dr. Sanday, one of the most fair-minded men, in his paper on "Free-thinking" (*Oxford House Papers*), says—

"If I were arguing the question of miracles with an open-minded inquirer, the line that I should take would be this: I should advise him to be careful to start from absolutely unassailable ground.

For this purpose, and at this preliminary stage, the Gospels would fall into the second line. I should not begin with them, but with the Epistles of S. Paul. And inasmuch as some of these, too, have been questioned, I should confine myself, in the first instance, to what are sometimes called the four 'great Epistles'—Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians. Among all solid scholars, of whatever way of thinking, these Epistles are acknowledged unreservedly as above suspicion.

"I should invite the inquirer to read carefully the description of a Christian community, and the extraordinary phenomena which habitually took place in it, in 1 Cor. xii. and xiv. S. Paul is not here proving anything. He has no motive for exaggerating. His object is rather to tone down manifestations which were apt to pass the bounds of sobriety. But he does assume throughout that there *were* manifestations, which he takes as a matter of course, though to us they seem extraordinary.

"These manifestations were very varied in their kind: 'gifts of healing,' 'workings of miracles,' 'prophecy,' 'discerning of spirits,' '(divers) kinds of tongues,' 'interpretation of tongues,' are all placed on the same footing.

"To some of these, no doubt, analogies may be found in other examples of great religious excitement. I do not for a moment deny the existence of such analogies, though I think they fall

considerably short of the facts which S. Paul describes with so much circumstantiality, and yet with such evident unconsciousness that his description contained anything questionable.

“Looking steadily at these two chapters, I say—

“(1) That I am absolutely certain that the facts referred to in them are real.

“(2) That to account for them our conception of Nature must be greatly enlarged.

“(3) That they are directly connected with a wave of unprecedented religious enthusiasm.”

(Oxford House Papers, 1st series—“Free-thinking.”)

W. Sanday, M.A., D.D.)

Then comes the last point, and that is the Resurrection. If the Resurrection happened, all other miracles are child’s-play; if the Resurrection happened, then any other miracle is perfectly credible. What evidence have we for the Resurrection having happened? I have merely time to summarise this.

First, the existence of Sunday. A certain number of Jews, as a matter of historical fact, changed their sacred day from Saturday to another day. It takes a great deal to make anybody change their sacred day at all. Why did they change it to that day? Was it to commemorate the death of their Master? It would have been Friday, if it were. Something happened on the

day after the Saturday that they thought was of infinitely greater importance than the death of their Master. The whole united Christian testimony was that Jesus Christ, who died on the Friday, rose on the Sunday.

Again, take the Christian Eucharist, quite apart from any significance of it. It has come down from that time to this as a historical Service, and you can hear the voice of Jesus Christ in it. In that Service there is a most joyous and glorious commemoration of a miserable death: "My Body, broken for thee; My Blood, shed for thee." The vilest death, the most criminal death, has been celebrated for nineteen centuries with shouts of thanksgiving. It is impossible if the death was not followed by the Resurrection.

And again, what happened to the Body of our Lord if He did not rise with it? Only two sets of people can have had it, the Jews or the disciples. If the Jews had had it they would have at once produced it to confound the story of the disciples "Here is the Body of the Man you say has risen." They did not, therefore they had not got it. The disciples, on the other hand, if they had got it, and went about saying that He had risen, were terrible impostors. But there is not a single critic that says the disciples were impostors; they all say that to the faith of the disciples the Resurrection was a reality. If, therefore, neither the disciples nor the

Jews had the Body of our Lord, what can we think but that it was that same Body, glorified and transfigured, that convinced even Thomas, and was seen by five hundred people in broad daylight?

Then again, we come to the witnesses, plain men, and simple characters, all giving their faithful witness; their very plainness and literal-mindedness showing they could not invent these things. Then again, the Christian Church could not have been founded on the sight of a dead Jewish peasant on the Cross. The Church, with all its faults, is the most powerful thing in the world to-day; like a long train in motion, it demands an adequate engine to have started it. We find the disciples coming back in a disheartened way; and we find them next full of hope and courage, preaching round the world, and lost preaching in the distance. What started this wonderful train called the Christian Church? Some engine, something great and adequate, must have started it, and nothing great and adequate has been ever supposed or suggested except the Resurrection of Christ from the dead. The Resurrection, therefore, as a historical fact, is true; there is no fact which has a greater weight of historical evidence behind it. The little differences in the accounts as to whether there was one angel or two are the greatest evidence of its truth. If each of you came in and told me of something that had happened in Ludgate Circus, if you were

true witnesses you would all differ slightly. In a law court nothing gives a counsel such a thrill of disgust as when his witnesses all tell exactly the same story as a matter of rote. Let me end, then, by expressing my firm belief that the reason we find the miraculous so hard to believe is because we are so unspiritual, because we live so little in the Spirit, because we live such material lives that we do not believe what the Spirit of God can do. If we lived more in the power of the Spirit we should believe more in the miraculous, and we should bear witness with ten times the force to Jesus and the Resurrection.

IV.—WHY DO I BELIEVE IN THE CHURCH?

THERE are few things in the world which at once appeal to the intellect, strike the imagination, and even win the heart, so much as the sight of a great University. Take Oxford, for instance. There it lies, with all its grand history and great traditions ; generations come and go, but Oxford lasts on ; she has her beginning in the long past, but her work still before her. Ever old, and yet ever young ; multiform, in many colleges, yet one ; leaning on the learning of the past, yet turning this way and that for fresh life ; the pride of the rich, but open to the poor ; she does her work, as she has done for centuries, as a great school of learning and character in the land. So, from the far past, with an even older origin ; with yet nobler traditions ; ever old and ever young ; uniting the past and the future ; with its many branches and dioceses, yet one ; the home of great ideas ; carrying with it the Faith once delivered to the saints ;

but ready still to receive every light that history or that science can throw upon it, has come down to us the Christian Church. It has a chequered history ; it has many blots in the past ; it has made many mistakes, for its treasures have been in earthen vessels ; but its influence has flowed on through human history like a river in the sea, like a Gulf Stream flowing through the ocean ; and it does its part now even more than it has done for centuries, as a great school of virtue in the world.

Such in substance are Dean Church's words in one of the *Oxford House Papers* on the Christian Church ; and they seem to me to give a very beautiful description of what the Church is, and of the influence of the Church on human history. The Church is a great organized Society, flowing, as it were, through human history, and—this is Dean Church's own illustration—like the Gulf Stream through the ocean.

Now, first of all, is it *a priori* probable that such a Society should be formed ? Is it *a priori* probable that the Christian ideas should be entrusted to the care of a great Society ? Certainly it is. First of all, because whenever we have an idea, in order to spread and propagate it in the world we always form a society ourselves. Take a temperance society ; what is it for, but to spread the idea of temperance ? Unless an idea is encased in a society it dies. So, secondly, it is *a priori* probable, because

man is what Aristotle calls a social animal—he is born for society. We are none of us born to be merely individuals, and it is in accordance with human nature that in our religious life we should be members of a society. So, thirdly, the Church was meant to be, undoubtedly, a great brotherhood. I often think that that is where it has most signally failed, at present; it has carried out many great ideas, but we have still got to recall it to what it was originally meant to be—the greatest brotherhood the world has ever seen. So far for the *a priori* grounds for belief in the Church as a Society.

Next we have to consider Christ's intention. What was Christ's idea? You ought to read Canon Scott Holland's sermon, entitled "The Rock of the Church," in "Creed and Character." Why was it, he asks, that our Lord kept taking a little knot of disciples up into the mountains, and patiently teaching them? Why did He not instead heal as many as He could among the people? He must have had some design. He tells us what His design was. After teaching the disciples for some time He asks them a question, "Whom say ye that I am?" One of them says, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." What does Jesus Christ say, with an expression of joy? "Upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." He had

at last got the rock on which He could build His Church; what He was looking for all through those hours among the mountains, spent teaching His disciples, was to find a rock on which He could build His Church; and He says, "Now, on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Then again, in His last hour he prayed for that Church, that it might be one. In what sense one? Visibly one. "I pray that they may all be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." What kind of unity does the world see? Invisible unity—an unity of heart only? Why, our Nonconformist friends in their new Catechism have thrown over that idea entirely. It is clear that the world can only see a visible unity; if the world was to see the unity of the Christian Church, and be convinced by it that the Father had sent the Son as Saviour of the world, there must be a visible unity for it to see. What does S. Paul say? "One Spirit and one Body"—"The Church which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all"—the receptacle, that is, into which the gifts and the graces of Christ shall be poured down. It was Christ's intention, then, to form such a Society.

Thirdly, What is its history? This Body, carefully prepared by Christ, was to tarry in Jerusalem

till it was clothed with power from on high. Filled with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, it then makes its start on its long journey. We all know its history in the Acts of the Apostles. The Spirit came and made weak men strong, cowards bold, and enabled them to master heresy from within as well as persecution from without. The Divine Society reached this country, probably, in the beginning of the second century. These are the dates, which are useful if you are asked how early the Church came to this country: about 200 A.D., Tertullian says it was among the Britons; in 239 A.D., Origen says, "Britain has one religion, which is the religion of Christ;" in 303, S. Alban was martyred; in 314, three British bishops were present at the Council of Arles; there were British bishops at the Council of Rimini, and we are told they were very poor; in 390 there was a well-known heretic, Pelagius, from Britain. Augustine came in 597, and then we have a new stream, as it were, of Christianity into Britain. This cathedral, for instance, has a piece of land at Tillingham, in Essex, given to it in 609. That will show you the continuity of the Church in Britain from St. Augustine's time. Since St. Augustine's time it has been oppressed by Rome in the Middle Ages, freed from Rome at the Reformation, and it comes down to us with an unbroken record; still the Church of our fathers, still the Church of Christ,

still the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Why am I a Churchman, then? Why should I not be a Churchman? Born of Christian parents, baptized into the Church, confirmed in the Church, I am prouder of my Church than of my University. It is a great thing to belong to a great society, part of which is popularly supposed to have been founded by King Alfred; but it is a far greater thing to belong to a Society founded by Jesus Christ Himself. I prefer, then, to turn the question round, and to ask, first, Why am I not a Roman Catholic? and, secondly, Why am I not a Dissenter?

The first question is easily answered. I am not a Roman Catholic, because I am an English Catholic. Catholic, everybody knows, means universal; but it means universal in two ways. It means universal because the commission is to "go into all the world;" but also universal in the sense that it has to teach all the truth; and therefore when we talk about the Catholic Church we mean Catholic in both those senses. There can be only one Church, and therefore when we talk about the Catholic Church we naturally object to the Roman Catholics usurping—as in the past they have most foolishly been allowed to usurp—the exclusive use of the word Catholic. The real answer to the question why I am not a Roman Catholic is, because I am an

English Catholic. I belong to the English branch of the one Universal Church which teaches all the truth. And the Catholic Church came down in this way to England. As the Catholic Church spread its mission round the world, each branch in each city was called the Church in or of that city—the Church of Jerusalem, the Church of Antioch, the Church of Christ in Rome, or the Church of Rome, and later, the Church of Christ in England, or the Church of England. Why do we not belong to the Church of Christ in Rome? Because we belong to the Church of Christ in England. Domineered over for centuries by Rome, at last, at the Reformation—just as a man who washes his face does not become a different man—the Church washed off the accretions to primitive doctrine and practice it had received from its sister Church, and remained the same Church, but freed from uncatholic practices and doctrines. Even when it was under the influence of Rome, the country was constantly protesting. Here are some instances. In the reign of Edward I. the Statute of Mortmain restrained the transfer of land to the Church by will; in the reign of Edward I. the Statute of Provisors restrained the giving away of English benefices by the Pope; in the reign of Richard II. the Statute of Præmunire restrained the action of the papal authority in regard to the disposal of English benefices before

they became vacant. Bishop Grosseteste, of Lincoln, made a noble protest in 1250, and John Wycliffe, in 1350, was really the precursor of the Reformation. After the Reformation the great sentence of the Magna Charta was fulfilled at last—"The Church of England shall be free;" and free from the oppression of the Pope, and free from accretions to the truth, we stand to-day like our island home, "four square to all the winds of heaven." That is the answer to the question, Why am I not a Roman Catholic?

Secondly, why am I not a Dissenter? Because I do not dissent. I do not dissent from four things: First of all, I do not dissent from Church government; secondly, I do not dissent from Church ordinances; thirdly, I do not dissent from the Church services; and fourthly, I do not dissent from the Church creeds.

(1) I do not dissent—I speak, of course, as an ordinary English Churchman—I do not dissent from Church government by bishops, priests, and deacons. I find by investigating into history that this has been the government of the Church from the start. Deacons are appointed in the Acts of the Apostles; priests or presbyters are appointed by the apostles by laying on of hands; bishops first come before us, in Scripture, in the appointment of Timothy and Titus, who are given a special commission by S. Paul, which can be

none other than the episcopal commission, although the name is not used. Why, if they were not to be bishops, were they to receive accusations against presbyters? Why were they to lay hands on them if they were not appointed over them? Why should the address on their duties be so totally different to S. Paul's pastoral address to the priests at Ephesus? He was clearly giving an episcopal commission to these young men, and not appointing them to merely pastoral duties. The Jewish ministry was three-fold, and therefore it is no surprise to us at all to hear Ignatius (first century) after mentioning the bishops about twenty times in his letters, say, "Reverence the deacons as of Jesus Christ, the bishop as the Father, and the presbyters as the Sanhedrim of God ; without this there is no Church." Gibbon, a thoroughly impartial authority, says the episcopal form of government appears to have been introduced before the close of the first century, and adds, "'No Church without a bishop' has been a fact as well as a maxim since the time of Tertullian and Irenæus." And Hooker says, "We require you to find out but one Church upon the face of the whole earth that has been ordered by your discipline, and has not been ordered by ours—that is, by episcopal regimen and government since the time the blessed apostles were here on earth."

(2) If I do not dissent from Church government,

the consolidation and massiveness of which, in all probability, under God, carried the Church through all the changes and chances at the break up of the Roman Empire, and has enabled the Society which it governed to guard and keep its treasure amid the winds and waves of changing history, still less do I dissent from *Church ordinances*. We baptize our children because Jesus said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me . . . for of such is the Kingdom of God." Because if God admitted children by circumcision to the Jewish covenant, why not by baptism to the Christian Church? Because the apostles baptized apparently whole households, and the promise was "to you and to your children." Because Justin Martyr tells us that he "has known those who were made disciples in their infancy." Because Augustine says infant baptism was "ever in use, and a thing delivered by the authority of the apostles." And Tertullian proves the prevalence of infant baptism by strongly objecting to it—we do not mind his objection, but we value his evidence. I am confirmed because S. Peter and S. John and S. Paul confirmed (Acts viii. and xix.), because the laying on of hands is called "one of the elements of the Faith," and S. Cyprian refers to "the bath of baptism," and the laying on of hands.

We restrict the celebration of the Holy Communion to our priests, because "no man taketh

this honour to himself" except he is duly called, as was Aaron, in the Jewish Church, to the special duties which fell upon him, and those duly ordained in the Christian Church to the special duties which fall on them. Ignatius says, "Let no Eucharist be valid except that celebrated by the bishop, or one appointed by the bishop." Thus, all authority for priests to officiate in the diocese of London, is derived from the Bishop of London. Mr. Gladstone says, in his "Testimony to the Catholic Faith," "We have therefore still amongst us the ordained hereditary witnesses of the truth, conveying it to us in an unbroken series from our Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles. This is to us the ordinary voice of Authority ; of authority equally reasonable and equally true, whether we will hear or whether we will forbear ; of authority which does not supersede either the exercise of private judgment, or the sense of the Church at large, or the supremacy of the Scriptures ; but assists the first, locally applies the second, and publicly witnesses to the last."

So again (1840). "The Bishop conveys the power of Administering Sacraments, whereby the Church is constantly replenished with children ; of ordaining Priests, by whom Sacraments are administered ; and of consecrating Bishops, by whom in turn these powers may be communicated anew to others, who may replace the actual holders, and

hand them on from one generation to another. In this line, therefore, alone it is that the effectual principle of continued propagation is carried down from the Apostles of Christ to the latest age." (Gladstone's "Testimony to the Catholic Faith.")

Therefore, I do not dissent from the ordinances of the Church.

(3) I do not dissent from the forms of prayer in use in the Church. First, because they are beautiful; secondly, because they are ancient, and we like to use prayers which are sanctified by the use of saints who have gone before. Further, because we object to being at the mercy of our minister's power of composition; and also because we feel we cannot do better than follow the example of Heaven, where "they cease not day or night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty." The Jews had forms of prayer. Christ taught His disciples a form of words; and He prayed to His Father time after time in the same words.

(4) I do not dissent from the Creeds of the Church. First, because they are Scriptural. Every sentence of the creeds, if we had time to go through them sentence by sentence, could be proved by sure and certain warrant of Holy Scripture. It is the motto of the Church of England, "The Church to teach, and the Bible to prove." Secondly, they are inventories of the Faith. When we let a house we have an inventory taken of the furniture and

fixtures ; a creed is the inventory or short summary of the Christian Faith. The creeds were forced upon the Church by two things: first, by the necessity of helping the catechumens who came to be taught what the Christian Faith was. You could not put a Bible into their hands, in the first place because for the first two hundred years there was practically not one to put into their hands, and if there had been one it would have been impossible for an uneducated person to have gathered, simply by reading the Bible, what the Christian Faith was ; it is all contained in the Bible, if you know where to look for it, but you have to gather it out of the Bible. If you were to put a Bible into the hands of a child without any explanation, it would receive a most complicated and confused idea of what the Christian Faith is. The creeds were, in the first place, forced upon the Church by the need for short summaries of Christian doctrine. For the first two hundred years the Bible practically was not collected into one book at all. It was written —there was a Gospel here, and a letter of S. Paul there, and so on, but to all intents and purposes it was not collected into a book until the end of the second century, and even then it was not until the invention of printing that it could be widely circulated throughout the world. The other necessity for them was from the point of view of heresy. When a man said, "The Christian

Church teaches *this*,” the Christian Church said, “No, it does not ; *this* is what we believe,” and put it in the creed. Those who have read the history of the Nicene Creed will know how it was formed at Nicaea chiefly because of the heresy of Arius. I do not, then, dissent from the creeds, first, because they are Scriptural ; secondly, because they are necessary inventories of the Christian Faith for teaching purposes ; and thirdly, because they are wreck-charts to show you must keep in the right track, or else you will fall into errors of faith.

The Athanasian Creed is the one most strongly objected to ; and I would say of that, first of all, it is not Athanasian ; and secondly, it is not a creed—it is a hymn, an old hymn repeated from side to side of the congregation, and probably composed by Hilary. Thirdly, it is mistranslated. You will find a penny paper published by the S.P.C.K. on the Athanasian Creed, which will fill in what I have not time to say now. Fourthly, all the definitions in it were simply forced upon the Church by the controversies current when it was compiled. And lastly, the chief damnatory clauses are taken straight from the Bible, and therefore if you object to them you must object to the Bible and not to the Athanasian Creed.

We are Churchmen, then, because we are baptized into the Church ; we abide in the Church’s fellowship as well as its doctrine, because it is Scriptural,

historical, and helpful. We love the teaching of the Church's year ; we love the way she lays us to rest with a grand hope of coming day.

“Our Mother, the Church, has never a child
She honours before the rest ;
And she singeth the same for mighty kings,
And the veriest babe on her breast ;
And the Bishop goes down to his narrow bed,
As the ploughman's child is laid,
And alike she blesseth the dark-browed serf,
And the chief in his robe arrayed.”

And we do all this without a trace of ill-feeling towards Dissenters. We weep for the sins of our forefathers, who helped to drive them from their heritage. We say union is strength, and we open our arms for them to come back. It is weakness to fight in scattered bands ; we say we could do far more work if we were once more united in the one Society which Jesus Christ founded, and in the unity for which He prayed with His last prayer.

And therefore I would conclude with these three points : What I put before you in answer to the question, “Why am I a Churchman ?” has nothing whatever to do with disestablishment ; every word I have said would be equally true whether the Church were established or disestablished. It so happens that the Church and the State have so grown together through centuries of history, that it is very difficult for us to think of them quite apart ;

but what I have said is absolutely the same, if it were disestablished to-morrow ; not a word I have said affects the question at all. Secondly, it has nothing whatever to do with ritual ; all I have said is absolutely true whether the simplest or the most elaborate ritual be used. Thirdly, the antiquity of the Church does not in the least interfere with its perennial youth. What we have got to do with our Church is to show that, like a faithful steward, it can bring out of its treasury things new and old. We have got to take this ancient Faith which it brings down to us, and adapt it to all the needs of the time as they arise. We have got to pray for a greater unity and a greater strength, and to stand firmly by it in spite of all attacks from one side or another. And so, standing firmly together in brotherly feeling and consideration for others who differ from us, we have got to work and to use its power until the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ.

THE END.

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